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SUBJECT: COUNCIL APPROVAL LIKELY FOR EUROPEAN COMMISSION
PROPOSAL TO SEND ELECTION EXPERTS FOR IRAQI NATIONAL
ELECTIONS

REF: STATE 114282

¶1. (SBU) According to the European Commission (EC) desk officer for Iraq, Julita Bas, the EC will recommend sending an "EU Enhanced Electoral Experts" mission (EEM) to Iraq for the January 2010 national elections, but Council (i.e., all Member States) approval will be necessary for the mission to go forward. In a meeting November 6 with USEU Political and Econ counselors, Bas said that the proposal for the January mission is that it be similar to the formula the EC used for monitoring previous regional elections in Iraq. It would not be a full-fledged EU election observing mission, which the EU considers a term of art for a full-scale mission, deployed far enough in advance and with adequate staffing, with access to election sites, and security to enable the mission to make a public statement. Bas said the EC does not believe security in Iraq is adequate to permit the functioning of a full-scale mission and to allow for full access to all voting sites, and expects its security advance mission to formalize that conclusion.

¶2. (SBU) Bas noted that for the regional elections in January 2009, the EC EEM consisted of two experts who had a monitoring role, who traveled to Iraq and met with others either participating in the elections or observing them, and who then prepared an in-house (rather than public) report on their observations. She said that for the upcoming January 2010 national elections, the EU "will field the best possible formula and deliver as much as possible," given the security and other limitations. The mission will likely, she said, consist of six to eight experts. They would be traveling to Iraq in the near future to assess the situation and decide the parameters of their mission. She said that nothing specific had been decided, but that the EEM would be enhanced by the added presence of EU diplomats already in Iraq. As with the regional elections, there would be no public statement or final report assessing the overall conduct of the elections.

¶3. (SBU) There is also no decision on a European Parliament (EP) component. In a meeting with USEU, Heidi Hautala, the Chairwoman of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the EP's Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET), told USEU officers that the parliament generally waited until the EC had determined the parameters of an election mission, and that generally the EP is then folded into a EC mission. Frequently, EU missions are actually headed by a sitting or former EP member (as with the observer mission for the August Afghanistan elections). She would not speculate as to whether the EP would seek a separate presence if there is not an appropriate EU mission in which they could participate. At a November 11 hearing at the EP, members of the EP delegation for relations with Iraq discussed the possibility of such a mission with a Commission representative.

¶4. (SBU) The final decision to approve the Mission will

come from the Council, which means that all 27 member states must agree. A diplomat at the Spanish mission (which will hold the presidency at the time of the elections) told us the mission would likely be approved. An Italian diplomat involved in working group discussions also said there should be no problem with approval, noting that the Council had urged the Commission to have as strong a presence as possible.

Murray

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